



House of Commons
Defence Committee

**Towards the next
Defence and Security
Review: Part Two—
NATO: Government
Response to the
Committee's Third
Report of Session
2014–15**

**Ninth Special Report of Session
2014–15**

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The Defence Committee

The Defence Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Ministry of Defence and its associated public bodies

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The Reports of the Committee, the formal minutes relating to that report, oral evidence taken and some or all written evidence are available in a printed volume. Additional written evidence may be published on the internet only.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are James Rhys (Clerk), Leoni Kurt (Second Clerk), Karen Jackson (Audit Adviser), Eleanor Scarnell (Committee Specialist), Ian Thomson (Committee Specialist), Christine Randall (Senior Committee Assistant), Rowena Macdonald (Committee Assistant) and Carolyn Bowes (Committee Assistant).

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Ninth Special Report

The Defence Committee published its Third Report of Session 2014–15 on *Towards the next Defence and Security Review: Part Two — NATO* (HC 358) on 31 July 2014. On 2 October 2014 the Committee received a memorandum from the Government, which is appended.

Appendix: Government response

1. The Government welcomes the HCDC's report, and has considered its conclusions and recommendations carefully. NATO's fundamental and enduring purpose for 66 years has been to safeguard the freedom and security of all its members. Nothing has changed. The citizens of our nations expect us to be willing and able to defend both ourselves and our Allies in the event that we are threatened and therefore NATO has been, and remains to this day, the cornerstone of UK defence.

2. The UK is proud to have hosted a successful NATO Summit in Wales. The Summit came at a pivotal point in NATO's history; it marked the transition from NATO's longest ever operation to a new non-combat mission in Afghanistan, and it provided the opportunity fundamentally to reevaluate NATO's stance towards Russia. In so doing, the Summit has addressed many of the committee's recommendations.

3. The Government's formal response to the HCDC's recommendations is set out below, and has been prepared by the MOD in consultation with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Cabinet Office. Where appropriate, related recommendations have been grouped together and we have responded with a single narrative. The HCDC's findings are highlighted in bold, with the Government response in plain text. For ease of reference, paragraph numbering follows that in the "Conclusions and Recommendations" section of the HCDC report.

Recommendations

- **The Russian deployment of asymmetric tactics represents a new challenge to NATO. Events in Ukraine demonstrate in particular Russia's ability to effectively paralyse an opponent in the pursuit of its interests with a range of tools including psychological operations, information warfare and intimidation with massing of conventional forces. Such operations may be designed to slip below NATO's threshold for reaction. In many circumstances, such operations are also deniable, increasing the difficulties for an adversary in mounting a credible and legitimate response.** (Paragraph 29)
- **We recommend that the NATO Summit also address the Alliance's vulnerabilities in the face of asymmetric (ambiguous warfare) attacks. In particular it should consider** (Paragraph 90 and 104):

- **What steps it needs to take to deter asymmetric threats;**
- **How it should respond in the face of an imminent or actual such attack;**
- **The circumstances in which the Article V mutual defence guarantee will be invoked in the face of asymmetric attack;**
- **How it can, as a matter of urgency, create an Alliance doctrine for “ambiguous warfare” and make the case for investment in an Alliance asymmetric or “ambiguous warfare” capability.**

Government Response

4. The Government agrees that Russia’s use of asymmetric tactics represents a challenge to NATO. However, what NATO describes as ‘hybrid warfare’ is not fundamentally new, although Russia has introduced a number of new aspects. We agree that NATO must understand the threat posed by asymmetric warfare and have the ability to organise itself to counter it. This is of critical importance both as a deterrent to those who would challenge us and as a counter-measure to any attempts to coerce an Ally or a portion of its population. At the Summit, Allied leaders agreed to ensure that NATO is able effectively to address “the specific challenges posed by hybrid warfare threats, where a wide range of overt and covert military, paramilitary, and civilian measures are employed in a highly integrated design”. This will now be taken forward in conjunction with work to improve NATO’s responsiveness through the Readiness Action Plan (RAP). The Defence Secretary also hosted a discussion with Defence Ministers at the Summit to explore the issues of Hybrid warfare which focused on where Hybrid warfare falls between Articles IV and V, in addition to how the Alliance could respond.

- **We believe that the Armed Forces needs to ensure that its training covers all types of warfare and responses to threats beyond counter insurgency actions. For instance, has the wide-wet gap crossing capacity been preserved?** (Paragraph 44)

5. The Government strongly agrees that Armed Forces personnel must be sufficiently trained to be able to respond to threats beyond counter insurgency and this certainly the case for UK Armed Forces. The UK’s wide-wet gap crossing capability has indeed been preserved. It is currently provided by 75 Engineer Regiment using the M3 Amphibious Rig vehicle based in Minden, Germany where the UK’s fleet is based alongside the German Bundeswehr’s own M3 fleet. This co-location provides for a de-facto ‘Centre of Excellence’ within NATO for this capability. The UK M3 fleet is due to remain in service until 2022 and we are currently planning to retain the capability beyond 2022.

- **The failure of national military forces to provide sufficient staff resources has left NATO command structures depleted. It is disappointing that the UK is continuing to fail to fill the posts expected of it.** (Paragraph 50)

6. As a leading contributor of military manpower to NATO, the British Government takes staffing very seriously and the MOD regularly monitors UK manning numbers in NATO. After operations, filling the reformed NATO Command Structure (NCS) is the Ministry of Defence’s highest manning priority, with key targets enshrined in our Defence Plan 2014.

The MOD plans to meet NATO's Full Operating Capability deadline of 1 December 2015 in full and is on track to achieve this with fill rates now at 86%.

- **We recommend that the UK (and US) practice the deployment of forces at least to divisional scale to Poland and the Baltic States via Germany (Paragraph 51)**
- **We recommend that the NATO Summit sets out plans to ensure (Paragraph 52 and 103):**
 - **Dramatic improvements to the existing NATO rapid reaction force; and**
 - **The re-establishment of large-scale military exercises including representatives from all NATO Member States, these exercises must involve both military and political decision-makers.**
- **We recommend that the NATO Summit sets out plans to ensure (paragraph 66 and 103):**
 - **The repositioning of equipment in the Baltic States;**
 - **A continuous (if not technically 'permanent') presence of NATO troops, on exercise in the Baltic.**
 - **The establishment of headquarters structures, at divisional and corps level to focus on Eastern Europe and the Baltic.**
 - **Consideration of the reestablishment of a NATO standing reserve force along the lines of the Allies Command Europe Mobile Force-Land, involving all Member States.**
- **The NATO alliance has not considered Russia as an adversary or a potential territorial threat to its Member States for twenty years. It is now forced to do so as a result of Russia's recent actions. Events in Ukraine this year, following on from the cyber attack on Estonia in 2007 and the invasion of Georgia by Russia in 2008, are a "wake-up call" for NATO. They have revealed alarming deficiencies in the state of NATO preparedness, which will be tough to fix. The UK Government should take the lead in ensuring that the NATO Summit addresses these threats in the most concrete and systematic fashion. (Paragraph 102)**

7. The Government welcomes the Committee's recommendations on NATO's response to the events in Ukraine. The Government can assure the Committee that this was one of the major discussions at the Summit and a number of decisions were taken by the 28 Allies to ensure the Alliance can deal swiftly and firmly with emerging threats; including the RAP which will strengthen NATO's collective defence and "significantly enhance the responsiveness of the NATO Response Force (NRF)".

8. The Government has strongly supported the development of the RAP, which was agreed at the Summit. The RAP sets out plans for a new Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), a multinational rapid response force elements of which are to be deployable within a few days throughout NATO territory, including its periphery with air, sea and Special Forces support. The UK has made a significant offer to NATO of a Battlegroup and a

Brigade headquarters on a rotational basis to help underpin the credibility of this force. The Government is also considering the potential for a UK contribution to the Multinational Corps Northeast (MNC NE) Headquarters in Szczecin, Poland, which, following the Summit, will enhance its role as a hub for regional cooperation. The UK will seek to ensure an effective RAP is achieved in the months following the Summit.

9. To facilitate these reinforcements, NATO will also establish an appropriate continuous presence in Alliance territory. This will include reception facilities, pre-positioned equipment, supplies and planners; and will require Host Nation support. At the Summit, NATO Allies also agreed to improve intelligence sharing, upgrade defence plans and hold more short-notice exercises. This decision sends a clear message: NATO protects all Allies, at all times. The VJTF, as part of the NRF, will provide NATO with a response force able to deploy ahead of other Alliance elements.

10. Since May 2014, NATO has been conducting Immediate Assurance Measures (IAMs) as part of an Alliance-wide (at 28) effort to reassure Eastern Allies. The UK made one of the most significant and comprehensive contributions to the IAMs, which included deployment of four Typhoon aircraft to the Baltic Air Policing mission in Lithuania, E3D AWACS aircraft conducting air policing activity in Polish airspace as well as significant participation in several exercises in the Baltic States and Poland.

11. The UK will continue to support NATO's IAMs at their current level until the new VJTF is operational and we will continue to make a significant contribution across the spectrum of measures. From now until the end of 2015, the UK plans to commit 3,500 personnel to participate in NATO exercises. For example 1,350 personnel including an Armoured Battlegroup are to support EX BLACK EAGLE in Poland in October. The UK has also offered RAF Typhoon aircraft to enhance the Baltic Air Policing mission in 2015 once again. This is in addition to the UK elements contributing to the NATO Response Force exercise on NATO's Southern Flank. The Government wants to see, the level of commitment demonstrated by our contribution matched by Allies to ensure a degree of equitable burden.

12. Allies continue to build on the experience gained in recent operations and improve our interoperability through the Connected Forces Initiative (CFI). At the NATO Summit, Allied leaders endorsed a substantial CFI Package with an "increased focus on collective defence", including the high-visibility exercise TRIDENT JUNCTURE 2015, including 25,000 Alliance personnel, to be hosted by Spain, Portugal, and Italy and a broader and more demanding exercise programme from 2016 onwards. The UK is a strong supporter of efforts to revitalise the NATO exercise programme to ensure that NATO has responsive, credible and interoperable forces, able to operate across the spectrum of conflict and intend to make a major contribution to this exercise along with our continued contributions to the IAMs throughout the remainder of 2014 and 2015.

- **The willingness, ability and readiness to act against common threats are vital for the future existence of NATO. This requires a collective view of Russian actions and possible responses should the situation in Ukraine worsen or repeat itself in a NATO country. The absence of a collective view risks perpetrating the Russian perception that NATO is divided and lacks the political will to respond to aggression, undermining NATO's deterrent posture.** (Paragraph 65)

13. The Government agrees that NATO's willingness, ability and readiness to act against common threats is critical to the Alliance's continued existence. It is encouraged by the display of solidarity, unity and resolve at the NATO Summit which delivered an Alliance-wide credible and measured response to Russia in both word and deed. The Summit included a collective view from all Allies that reaffirmed our commitment to the Washington Treaty, the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, commitment to the transatlantic bond and to providing the resources, capabilities and political will required to ensure the Alliance remains ready to meet any challenge.

14. These words were backed up by agreement of the RAP and a public commitment to reverse the trend of declining defence budgets, both of which the Government has strongly supported. The RAP sets out a package of measures to provide reassurance to vulnerable Allies and deterrence against potential Russian threats. NATO Allies have also collectively agreed to reverse the trend of declining defence budgets and aim to increase defence expenditure in real terms as GDP grows and direct defence budgets to be as efficient and effective as possible. For Allies currently meeting the NATO guideline to spend a minimum of 2% of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on defence will aim to continue to do so. Likewise, Allies spending more than 20% of their defence budgets on major equipment, including related Research & Development, will continue to do so. Allies whose current proportion of GDP spent on defence is below this level will; halt any decline in defence expenditure; aim to increase defence expenditure in real terms as GDP grows; and aim to move towards the 2% guideline within a decade with a view to meeting their NATO Capability Targets and filling NATO's capability shortfalls. This is the first time Allies have made such a collective public commitment on defence expenditure and is solid expression of collective political will to respond robustly to current threats.

- **The combination of substantial Russian minorities (which constitute a majority in some areas) and the influence of the Russian media could make Estonia and Latvia in particular vulnerable to the type of information warfare and inciting of disturbances that have caused such chaos in Ukraine.** (Paragraph 69)

15. The Government fully recognises the significant influence of Russia's state and state-sponsored media, including its ability to incite politically motivated violence and exploit religious or ethnic fracture lines. The UK MOD continues to provide support to Ukraine in this domain including through training Ukrainian personnel in strategic communications. The MOD is currently exploring opportunities to support other countries in the region, including Latvia and Estonia, by potentially supporting efforts to enhance responses to Information Warfare through effective media engagement, offering an alternative narrative and demonstrating the deceit of Russian propaganda. The newly accredited NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence in Latvia is the primary conduit for UK engagement with Allies, including Estonia and Latvia on Strategic communication. The Centre will help the Alliance to advance its strategic communication capabilities and ensure that NATO's strategic communication becomes contemporary, dynamic and efficient. The UK currently contributes a subject matter expert.

- **We recommend that NATO is tasked and mandated to plan, train and exercise for a cyber attack to ensure the necessary resilience measures are in place. The use of asymmetric warfare tactics present a substantial challenge to a political military alliance such as NATO. These tactics are designed to test the lower limit of the**

Alliance's response threshold, are likely to involve deniable actors, and work to exploit political division. They also bring in to question the operation of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, NATO's cornerstone. (Paragraph 86)

- **Russia's actions in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine illustrate the immediate (although not the only) reasons for reconsideration of Article 5 in relation to 'deniable' actions. Cyber attacks—where attribution is often difficult but of central importance before any offensive targeted responses are considered—will increase. The use of airliners hijacked for attacks in New York and the Pentagon in the USA in 2001 were considered sufficient to invoke a NATO Article 5 response, even though not immediately attributable to any nation state but to non-state actors. That NATO Article 5 declaration (the only one since the inception of NATO) was used in conjunction with Chapter 7 UN Resolutions to form the ISAF missions and take military action against the nation state of Afghanistan for harbouring those non-state actors and their promoters. Attribution therefore—even if of vicarious or 'deniable' promotion by nation states, such as in the situation in Ukraine—illustrates the developing need for NATO to re-examine the criteria and doctrines, both legal and military, for the declaration and use of Article 5 for collective defence and the declaration and use of associated Article 4 (itself only invoked four times) for collective security. (Paragraph 87 and 103)**
- **In particular, NATO must resolve the contradiction between the specifications in Article 5 that a response should be to an "armed attack" and the likelihood on the other hand of an "unarmed attack" (such as a cyber attack or other ambiguous warfare). NATO must consider whether the adjective "armed" should be removed from the definition of an Article V attack. (Paragraph 88)**

16. The Government does not underestimate the cyber threat and notes the Committee's recommendations. The UK has worked with NATO and Allies to improve NATO's ability to address the cyber threat by improving NATO's ability to protect its own networks, sharing information and best practice between Allies and conducting cyber defence training and exercises.

17. NATO has increasingly demonstrated an awareness of the cyber threat since 2008 when it established the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence. In recent years it has been steadily increasing its programme of cyber defence exercises, with a total of seven NATO wide cyber exercises planned for 2014.

18. NATO is also currently developing a military concept for cyber defence. This will incorporate Alliance military direction and guidance, building upon the NATO Military Committee's guidance on military implementation of NATO'S Strategic Concept and the Enhanced NATO Policy on Cyber Defence, which was endorsed at the NATO Summit. We anticipate that this will set out how the Alliance will plan, train and exercise for a cyber attack.

19. The collective defence through Article V is, and has been for 66 years, the bedrock of the Alliance and one of NATO's three core tasks (including collective defence, cooperative security and crisis management). The decision on whether or not to invoke Article V will be taken by the North Atlantic Council (NAC) and at the Summit Allies affirmed that

cyber defence is part of NATO's core task of collective defence. A decision as to when a cyber attack would lead to the invocation of Article V would be taken by the North Atlantic Council on a case-by-case basis. We consider that flexibility provided using the NAC to decide whether or not to invoke Article V on a case-by-case basis is a strategic strength which we are not in favour of modifying.

- **The breadth of the Russian unconventional threat, stretching into economic and energy policy makes it clear that NATO cannot counter all of the specific threats posed by Russia. Responding to these specific threats will be a matter for national Governments and the EU. However, NATO must ensure that its response to any such operation perpetrated against a Member State is timely and robust. This also requires investment in new capabilities to address the new threats.** (Paragraph 89)

20. The Government agrees that responding to the full range of threats needs to be done in conjunction with national Governments and other international or multinational organisations. This was one of the reasons why at the Summit we hosted a meeting of Allied Foreign Ministers with International Organisations. Indeed, the Government is clear that at present the primary tool for dealing with Russian illegal actions is economic sanctions through the EU. The Government also shares the HCDC's view that investment in new capabilities is integral to ensuring NATO's continued ability to respond to external threats. The Government is encouraged by the progress NATO has made in identifying the priority capability shortfalls across the Alliance amongst Allies, and the momentum generated at the Summit towards filling them.

21. Recognising the importance of deployable assets, Allies agreed at the Summit that 20% of all defence budgets should be dedicated to major new equipment, including related Research and Development. The Government already meets this target and can assure the Committee of its continued commitment to equipping its Armed Forces with the best equipment available.

- **Given questions raised by Russian actions in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, we recommend that the Government fundamentally reviews its priorities as defined in the National Security Strategy. In particular, we note that state-on-state conflict was designated a low, tier 3, threat. We therefore suggest that substantial reworking of the National Security Strategy is required immediately.** (Paragraph 97)

22. The Government's response to Russia's actions in Ukraine has been to provide, alongside our international partners, political and economic support to Ukraine, to help reach a diplomatic solution to the crisis, and to respond appropriately to unacceptable Russian behaviour with diplomatic and economic sanctions. Therefore a package of measures, including those taken at the NATO Wales Summit, has been put in place to ensure that the Alliance remains able and willing to fulfil its commitment to collective defence.

23. The 2010 National Security Strategy is a framework designed to allow the Government to prepare for, and respond effectively to, a wide range of threats. It acknowledged that the risks we face are uncertain and unpredictable, and included the possibility of an international military crisis between states that might draw in the UK and its allies under Tier 1 risks, and a conventional attack by a state on another NATO or EU member to

which the UK would have to respond under Tier 3 risks. It also noted that the inclusion of a risk in Tier 3 rather than Tier 1 or 2 does not mean it has been discounted, as all Tier 2 and Tier 3 risks require action, and we should take early action to prevent them from escalating. We continue to assess that the threat of state attack against a NATO or EU member remains low, although we keep all the risks identified in the NSS under review. The NSS and SDSR will in any case be reviewed in 2015. We therefore do not accept the Committee's recommendation that a substantial reworking of the NSS is required immediately.

- **The nature of the reappearance of the threat from Russia, and its likely manifestation in asymmetric forms of warfare underline the importance of high quality, independent analysis of developments in Russia and in Russian military doctrine. The closure of the Advanced Research and Assessment Group has led to a drastic denuding of capability in this area. The MoD needs a new Conflict Studies Research Centre (which ARAG subsumed).** (Paragraph 98)

24. The MOD has the ability to draw on expertise from many sources to analyse current threats, future risks and the long-term strategic and operational environments. First, the Defence Academy has longstanding partnerships with two academic institutions, Cranfield University and King's College London. Arrangements allow the Department to propose or sponsor research by the Academy's significant number of Master's degree students. Second, the Defence Strategy and Priorities office in the MOD, which covers issues of strategic importance to the Department, and the Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre (DCDC), produce concepts and doctrine, in addition to synthesising operational lessons and identifying future trends. This is underpinned by research and experimentation. The MOD has reinforced its policy and analytical effort through a new a new post focused on Russian Strategic Studies. Finally, the MOD has access to an extensive range of external sources, including corporate membership of several major think tanks and increasingly close engagement with a network of academics and subject matter experts, in accordance with the Civil Service Reform Plan's commitment to open policy making.

- **There may be an argument that lack of MOD capacity doesn't matter given the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's presence in the region. However, given cuts in the budget of the FCO; the level of ambassadorial representation in the Baltic States; the lack of designated language posts (and therefore a lack of language speakers in the Baltic region); and the minimal size of the FCO desk dealing with Ukraine before the conflict, we believe that this capability gap is not unique to the MOD but represents a significant strategic gap for the Government.** (Paragraph 99)

25. The FCO has reinforced its Eastern Europe and Central Asia Directorate by increasing the number of senior staff and deputy directors, as well as expanding the teams working on Russia and Ukraine. These increases include both permanent and additional shorter term reinforcements, with appropriate experience and language skills. Staff numbers have also been increased by temporary reinforcement to support the Ambassador and his team at the British Embassy in Kyiv. Heads of Mission at British Embassies in the Baltic States have excellent access to all the senior political decision-makers and have delivered numerous high-level visits and had all necessary communications at the appropriate level with their hosts since the Ukraine crisis broke.

- **We recommend that the Ministry of Defence address, also as a matter of urgency, its capacity to understand the nature of the current security threat from Russia and its motivations. Ensuring that there are sufficient numbers of Defence Attachés to provide the analysis and expertise required is one measure which would help to address this issue. In particular we recommend the appointment of additional Defence Attachés to cover the Baltic States and in Central and Eastern Europe and reverse the cutbacks in Russia and Ukraine. We further recommend that the Government ensure that there is adequate representation in Poland which may be of critical importance in the future. We also recommend the creation of a “red team” in the Ministry of Defence to provide a challenge to existing orthodoxy from a specifically Russian perspective. (Paragraph 100 and 105)**

26. The Government keeps the network of Defence Attachés under constant review. The MOD believes that the existing Defence Attaché network is sufficiently robust to deliver military diplomatic advice to the Government, but the Government can assure the Committee that additional regional experts would be made available should there be a recognised need. For instance, from early July to late August this year the Government augmented the Defence Section in Ukraine with an assistant Defence Attaché. Also we have a Nordic-Baltic network of Defence Attachés focused on regional Defence and Security issues. The MOD notes the Committee’s recommendation of the creation of a “red team” and as described in paragraph 24, we have put in place a range of measures. The MOD is taking active steps to reinforce its policy and analytical effort on this issue. The relevant parts of Defence Intelligence (DI) have been reinforced during the crisis and staffing levels are under active review. DI is also working to improve the scope and scale of its intelligence exchanges with allies and partners.

- **We recommend that the NATO Summit also address the Alliance’s vulnerabilities in the face of asymmetric (ambiguous warfare) attacks. In particular it should consider (Paragraph 101 and 104):**
 - **How to establish the intelligence processes and an ‘Indicators and Warning’ mechanism to alert Allies to the danger or imminence of such an attack.**

27. NATO already has an established ‘Indicators and Warning’ process which is available to all Allies on a bespoke NATO communication and information system. However as always the key is to ensure that such intelligence gathering/assessments feeds into an effective decision making process to enable the NATO Crisis Response System (NCRS) to prepare for and respond to the full range of crises that the Alliance might be required to face.

- **We recommend that, in opening the NATO Summit, the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State should make a commitment to the UK maintaining defence spending at or above 2% of GDP. Increasing levels of spending amongst European NATO Member States and the collective efficiency of such spending must be made a priority of the Summit as a demonstration of NATO’s political will and its commitment to collective defence. (Paragraph 106)**

28. The Government shares the Committee’s view that increasing defence spending must be a priority amongst Allies both to send a strong message of Allies’ commitment to

collective defence and to enable the required investment in priority capabilities. Whilst no single measurement can accurately portray the full breadth of a single nation's contribution to the Alliance, the proportion of GDP devoted to defence is an important indicator of how seriously members view collective security. At the Summit, all the Allies publicly recognised that NATO's level of aspiration in terms of military capability requires funding. They acknowledged the importance of fairer burden sharing, so the Alliance moves away from its disproportionate dependence on its largest Ally, the US. All Allies agreed to halt any decline in Defence spending, aim to increase it in real terms as GDP grows and to move towards 2% within a decade. But it is not just the amount of money that matters; it is also about how the money is spent, therefore Allied leaders also agreed that 20% of Defence budgets should be dedicated to major new equipment. The Government is committed to spending 2% of GDP on Defence. We have consistently met and indeed exceeded the target and will continue to do so until the end of the spending review period.

- **This report does not deal with the detail of emerging events in the non-NATO state of Ukraine but it would be wrong to publish a report on NATO relations and responses to Russia without expressing our sympathies and condolences to all the families, friends and nations who have experienced the deaths of relatives, friends and citizens from the downing of Malaysian Airlines civilian flight MH17 with military rockets near the borders of Ukraine and Russia. Our condolences are extended to all affected but especially to the relatives and friends of the UK citizens killed and to our allies who suffered such a heavy toll of innocent lives. (Paragraph 107)**

29. The Government joins the committee in expressing its sympathy for all those affected by recent hostilities. It also extends condolences to the families, friends and nations who have suffered from the tragic loss of innocent life. We will continue our efforts to support Ukraine, and still stand firmly behind its right to sovereignty.